

PLANNING STATEMENT

In Support of the Proposed First-Floor Side Extension at 28 Common Rise, Hitchin

(Prepared following Case Officer comments dated 1st December 2025)

1. Introduction

This statement has been prepared to address the Case Officer's comment expressing a *"degree of concern that the first floor side extension is adding visual bulk"* and that *"blank facing first floor side extensions are not a feature of the street scene,"* in relation to planning application 25/02561/FPH

This document aims to demonstrate that:

1. The proposed design complies with national and local policy
2. The extension preserves the character of Common Rise.
3. Given that the first-floor element is located approximately 6 metres behind the original street-facing elevation and a further 8 meters from the street (set back 14 meters in total), the view is that our extension should not be perceived as visually bulky or dominant.
4. The proposal is less impactful than several extensions approved in the immediate area and visible within the street scene.
5. The scheme results in no harm to neighbouring amenity given that it is set back a reasonable distance from the boundary.
6. The extension represents a modest and proportionate addition, subordinate to the original host dwelling.
7. The extension allows for a modern family home with the previously approved room becoming a double room suitable for a growing family.
8. The extension contributes to the regeneration of old 1930s houses, which are not traditionally suitable for modern living but are an asset to the local community and families, as amenities such as the train station and good schools are close by.

This statement adopts a similar structure to the successful submission for 11 Common Rise (approved by NHDC on 12 November 2019). We feel the development at 11 Common Rise is a valuable comparison for this case given the similarities in form - noting that our side extension would be less dominant given its placement at the rear of the host dwelling rather than the street facing front.

In the case of 11 Common Rise, the proposal attracted support from neighbouring properties and from local councillor Kay Tart. While her comments were given in relation to the extension at No. 11, many of the principles she highlighted—particularly those relating to streetscape impact, proportionality, and the suitability of extensions on this part of Common Rise—are directly applicable to the current proposal at No. 28. Her full comments are provided below.

“As the District Councillor for Walsworth I have spoken at some length with the homeowners about their plans and application. A number of properties in Common Rise have been extended to varying degrees and in a number of different styles, including a number of first floor extensions to the side, which means that despite this proposed extension being unique in its design, it is not the first of its kind. There are a large number of ground floor front extensions, all varying in style, along with different porches and canopies, which means that there is no longer any consistency of design on this street. The homeowners have designed their proposed extension to be both considerate and sympathetic to neighbouring properties, considering the architectural details carefully, but also to be unique. This extension will not block their neighbours' light or obstruct their windows and, owing to its situation opposite a "T" junction, also proves to be no issue with regards to overlooking, which is why I believe the proposed extension to be perfectly suited to this property. Given the limitations these properties present internally, including, but not limited to, the pitch of the stairs, we should be encouraging and supporting extensions and design proposals which make these properties more accessible and more usable in the 21st century. I believe that this is what this application will do. I am thoroughly and wholeheartedly in support of this application”

Councillor Kay Tart commented on the No.11 2-storey front/ side extension, 2019.

2. Existing Site and Context

Common Rise is characterised by 1930s semi-detached properties, many of which have been extended substantially over time. The character of the area is not uniform; properties frequently include:

- Single and two-storey rear extensions
- Side additions (often full-depth at ground level)
- Front and side two-storey extensions, including various design porches
- Extended roof forms
- Altered massing where properties step with changing land levels

The street scene, therefore, comprises a mixed architectural rhythm, not a strict symmetrical pattern, and is capable of accommodating modest variations in form without harm. Unlike the front/side extension approved at 11 Common Rise, which projected prominently into the forward street scene, the proposal here at No.28 is:

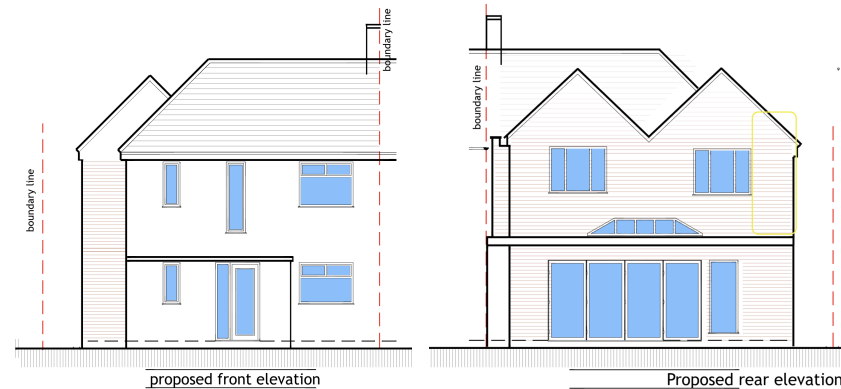
- Set back significantly - around 14 meters from the street curb - and 6 meters behind the front building line of the host dwelling.
- Significantly screened by the existing built form.
- No part of the extension projects forward of the principal elevation, and the proposal is visually recessive within the street.

3. The Proposal

The scheme seeks permission for a first-floor side extension positioned above an existing single-storey footprint already granted planning consent.

Key design features include:

- The first-floor extension is set back from the main façade by 6m, making it visually subordinate and preventing it from appearing overbearing; even more so given the host dwelling benefits from generous land to the side.
- A lowered ridge line, compliant with the requirement for proportional massing.
- Matching render, roof pitch, materials and detailing reflecting the original 1930s character.
- A blank side elevation by necessity, avoiding overlooking and complying with privacy requirements.
- The proposal increases the property's functional family accommodation while remaining visually modest.



4. Siting, Form and Impact on Street Scene

4.1 Subservience and massing

The design follows three core principles:

1. Lower ridge level than the main roof reduces perceived height.
2. Setback from principal frontage reduces massing and visibility.
3. Continuation of existing architectural proportions ensures cohesion.

4.2 Precedent in the immediate locality

The Case Officer's comment that side extensions "are not a feature of the street scene" does not reflect the established pattern within Common Rise. Nos. 11, 16, 75 and 14 are some of the houses on Common Rise which have NHC-approved developments, including:

- Two-storey side/rear/front extensions
- Extensions that significantly alter semi-detached proportions.



No 14 - Before and after planning approval



No.16 Before and after planning approval



No.75 Side extension

These examples support the Council's position that the Common Rise character is capable of evolution, provided design quality is upheld.

4.3 Visual bulk

The extension adds far less appreciable visual bulk compared to other developments for the following reasons:

- The side addition is modest in size and proportional to the host dwelling with only part of the roof slope being visible from the road.
- The extension follows a simple, recessive alignment, consistent with the requirement for “subservient” additions.
- The proposal does not create a terracing effect and maintains generous spacing around the dwelling. This particular pair of houses benefits from a noticeably more spacious junction than the majority of properties along Common Rise.

5. Blank Side Wall – Policy Position and Justification

The officer has expressed concern regarding the “blank” first-floor elevation. However:

- A blank elevation is designed to protect neighbouring privacy - however we are open to suggestions on this such as placements of obscure windows for example.
- The elevation is not prominent in the street scene and is screened by the host dwelling.
- The rendered finish will blend the extension to the main house.

6. Amenity Considerations

The proposal is unlikely to result in any materially harmful impacts in relation to overdominance, loss of privacy, and loss of daylight/sunlight due to.

- The orientation of the properties rear face benefiting them from morning sunlight
- Adequate separation from the neighbouring property
- The side addition being modest in scale
- The extension is located directly above the previously approved single-storey side extension, rather than projecting further outward.
- Privacy is preserved due to the absence of side windows.

7. Compliance With Planning Policy

Developments should be approved where they improve the character and function of a property. This proposal benefits from:

- Enhancing living accommodation,
- Improves internal layout efficiency,
- A design sympathetic to the original house, neighbours and street scene
- Preservation of the generous parking space

8. Conclusion

In summary, this planning statement demonstrates that:

- The extension is modest, proportionate and subservient.
- The design is high quality, reflecting the architectural language of the 1930s semi-detached pair.
- The concerns around “visual bulk” are mitigated through positioning (set back 14m from the street curb), reduced ridge height, and material continuity.
- The side elevation is not a prominent or impactful component of the street scene.
- The proposal represents a far less visually assertive form of development than extensions already accepted and approved on Common Rise.
- The extension fully complies with the NPPF and both adopted and emerging Local Plan policies.

It is believed that the first-floor side extension proposed within this application (and justified throughout this statement) fits comfortably within both the Local Planning Policy Framework and the evolving architectural character of Common Rise. The extension is modest, proportionate and subservient, with no harmful impact on the street scene or neighbouring amenity. A further key consideration is the family-accommodation benefit the proposal provides. Houses on Common Rise do not traditionally have rooms which are suitable for modern family living. The extension allows the property to function as a modern family home, increasing bedroom size, improving circulation and ensuring longevity of use, all of which are outcomes supported by national and local planning policy. For these reasons, and in light of the functional, social and architectural benefits described, it is respectfully submitted that planning permission should be granted.